

Henry Barnes Knew Tuckton When It Was Only Twelve

Cottages

By David English

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Four weeks after they were married Emma and Henry Barnes decided that a site opposite a lovely bluebell bank at Tuckton would be ideal for their house. In a few months it was built and Mrs. Barnes used to feed cows that nosed inquiringly over the garden fence. Mr. Barnes would drive his horse and cart across the fields and through the river at Tuckton to Christchurch. That was fifty years ago.

Last week, Mr. Barnes, now 85, and Mrs. Barnes, 78, celebrated their Golden wedding. They had telegrams, cards and presents from their family delivered to that same house, No. 2, Old Priory Road, in which they have lived for fifty years.

Fifty years. . . half a century that has brought many changes. There are no fields now, only houses. The bank and the bluebells have gone, instead there are more houses, and in front of them a bus stop.

On Monday I walked across the road from the bus stop and up a neat little garden path flanked with a magnificent array of flowers. A Board said: "Henry Barnes, Landscape Gardener," and from behind it stepped Mrs. Barnes with a watering can in her hand.

I congratulated her on her golden wedding anniversary and she said she was pleased to see me. So, too, was Mr. Barnes, for although he lives over the Bournemouth border, his heart and soul are in Christchurch.

Tuckton 12 Cottages

Mr. and Mrs. Barnes were married in Shute Devon, and Mr. Barnes, who was born in Tuckton when there were only twelve cottages there decided to have his house built just outside the village.

"In those days," he said, "there were hardly any houses in the surrounding district. We used to stand down at Iford Lane and look across the fields to see all the lilies in my garden."

Of course, with the growth of Southbourne Mr. Barnes found plenty of business and nearly all the well-laid-out gardens in the eastern suburb of Bournemouth were tended by his hand at one time or another. His own garden is a pretty sight. So, too, are those of his two sons who live on either side. They are carrying on the business now.

How Christchurch Has Changed.

Mrs. Barnes was very interested in Christchurch. She agreed when I told her it had changed a great deal in the PAST few years. "I used to go shopping there in the old days," she said. "Everyone knew everyone else then and a stranger couldn't have been in the town five minutes before everyone knew about it."

She has a lot of memories of Christchurch---the steps leading up to the shops, the narrow little pavements, all the old councillors.

Mr. Barnes, too, knows a lot about Christchurch. He went to the Priory School. His grandchildren go there now and sit in the same classroom as he used to.

"It's a fine town," he says, "there are some fine people there. But the loveliest thing in Christchurch is the Priory. As a boy I used to go across the ferry to go to the Priory, and for a long time I used to go every Sunday. There couldn't be a more beautiful church."

He had been listening-in to the Royal silver wedding service. "Mrs. Barnes says she would have loved to have seen that," he smiled. "But I would give anything to be able to go to a service in Christchurch Priory."

Can't Tend His Garden Now.

He looked a little grim as he explained: "I can't move about like I used to: it makes me very annoyed to think I can't do my own gardening."

He can remember the first Tuckton Bridge being built, and saw the first and the last tram in Bournemouth.

About Bournemouth, he had this to say: "It's a beautiful and wealthy town. I think we have an excellent council."

Mr. and Mrs. Barnes have three children, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. They have seen much and have had a happy life, but one thing they agree upon. Although they would not have wished to have lived at any other time, the conditions now are so much better for the working man.

"And that," said Mr. Barnes, who is a very wise old man, "is how it should be."